

1891-2.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.
NEW SOUTH WALES.

CENSUS AND INDUSTRIAL RETURNS ACT OF 1891.
(INFORMATION RESPECTING.)

Ordered by the Legislative Assembly to be printed, 2 February, 1892.

The Government Statistician to The Honorable the Colonial Secretary.

Government Statistician's Office, 25 January, 1892.

IN the second part of the Census and Industrial Returns Act of 1891 it is provided that "inquiry shall be made into the industrial condition of the people, the hours of labour, the regularity of employment, the wages of workers, and the accommodation afforded by employers for their workpeople, the employment of children and females, the displacement of labour by machinery, the return upon capital invested, the variation in prices, and any other subject on which the Colonial Secretary may deem it expedient to have inquiry made."

Power to accomplish the object in view is conferred by the provision that "it shall be lawful for the Government Statistician, or any person duly authorised under his hand, to enter any factory, mine, workshop, or place where persons are employed, at any time within reasonable hours, for the purpose of making any inquiries or observations needful for the proper carrying out of this Act."

In compliance with the provisions just recited an inquiry has been made into the conditions prevailing in connection with the various industries of the Colony, and the results of such inquiry will be found in the series of reports, of which the accompanying form an instalment.

An investigation of the kind contemplated by the Act having never before been attempted in the Colony, it was feared that trouble of no ordinary kind would be encountered in persuading employers and others, from whom information was desired, to assist the inquiry. Some difficulty was certainly experienced before many would recognise that an exact knowledge of the industrial condition of the working classes was a matter of State concern, but great readiness was displayed in affording information within the scope of the inquiry, when its nature came to be understood. In no case has recourse been needed to the penal provisions of the Act, a most gratifying circumstance, seeing that from their nature some of the questions touched upon somewhat tender ground.

In the special report of each industry attention has been for the most part confined to the hours of labour, the regularity of employment, the accommodation provided for workers, their wages and earnings, the employment of women and children, and other cognate subjects.

With regard to the displacement of labour by machinery, the return upon capital invested, and other matters not touched upon in these reports, a considerable mass of useful information has been gathered. This it is proposed to embody in a general report, embracing all the leading industries, which will follow the special reports now being compiled.

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